

## AUTOMATIC TEA MAKER

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### 1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the field of beverage makers, and more particularly to a novel apparatus for brewing tea leaves and extracting a flavored liquid which is dispensable in accordance with the taste of the user with respect to flavor strength.

#### 2. Brief Description of the Prior Art

In the past, it has been the conventional practice to introduce tea leaves or the like into a boiling liquid such as water so that the flavor of the leaf is extracted and circulated within the water medium. At the judgment of the user, the strength of the flavor is under the control of the user who selectively removes the tea leaves from the boiling water after a period of steeping. The flavored liquid may now be dispensed by pouring into a cup or other serving device. Some attempts have been made to automate the steeping procedure by including timers, valves and other apparatus for controlling the release of the flavor substance into the surrounding boiling water and dispensing the same.

Difficulties and problems have been encountered with such apparatus which stem largely from the fact that the flavor strength differs from one individual to another and automatic devices do not take such differences into account. Furthermore, conventional automatic beverage machines do not include a means for combining a concentrated flavored liquid with unflavored water so that the user may judge or select a desired flavor strength. Other problems have been encountered with conventional beverage makers which reside in their expense, complexity and cumbersome operation.

Therefore, a long-standing need has existed to provide a novel beverage maker, particularly for the extracting of flavor from tea leaves, which is simple to use, inexpensive to manufacture and which provides a means by which the user may readily select the strength of flavor as the flavored beverage water is being dispensed.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, the above problems and difficulties are obviated by the present invention which provides a novel beverage maker for brewing tea from a quantity of tea leaves, which includes a housing containing a liquid such as water and which incorporates a controlled burner or heater so that the enclosed water may be brought to a boil. The housing further includes a chamber or tank for removably mounting a strainer into which a quantity of tea leaves is placed. Conduit and valve means are carried on the housing between the heated water supply and the tank so that at the selection of the user, heated or boiled water may be introduced into the tank in order to wet and extract flavor from the leaves. A discharge nozzle is provided for dispensing either water from the housing or tea flavored water from the tank via a selector valve which monitors and controls the amount of tea flavored water being mixed with the housing water so that the strength of tea extract can be controlled during the dispensing procedure. In one form, the selector valve takes the form of a slideable member having apertures of different size adapted to align or register with the tea flavored water conduit prior to combining or mixing with the housing water.

Also, an ON/OFF valve is incorporated into the discharge nozzle and heater controls as well as water level indication is provided on the housing. A water level indicator can also be incorporated into the housing so that the user may check on the availability of water in the housing for use in the making of the beverage.

Therefore, it is among the primary objects of the present invention to provide a novel beverage maker for wetting and extracting flavor from tea leaves which includes means for selectively determining the flavor strength of the liquid being dispensed from the beverage making apparatus.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a novel tea making apparatus which is relatively inexpensive to produce and which may be readily used by unskilled persons without the requirement of special skills.

Still a further object of the present invention is to provide a novel tea beverage apparatus which includes a unique valve selector for combining tea flavored water with clear boiling water so that a desired tea strength is dispensed.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a novel beverage maker for wetting and steeping tea leaves and which includes a means of dispensing the flavor extracted from the tea leaves into a selected dispensing strength.

Another object of the invention is to provide a novel beverage maker incorporating a pair of water chambers and having separate discharge conduits which are joined together by a selector valve so that the amount of tea flavored water in one container or tank may be combined and mixed with clear water from the other container whereby tea strength is readily controlled by the user.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The features of the present invention which are believed to be novel are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The present invention, both as to its organization and manner of operation, together with further objects and advantages thereof, may best be understood with reference to the following description, taken in connection with accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a front perspective view showing one embodiment of the beverage maker incorporating the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a transverse cross-sectional view of the beverage maker shown in FIG. 1; and

FIG. 3 is an enlarged transverse cross-sectional view of the flavor selector valve employed in the beverage maker of FIG. 2 as taken in the direction of arrows 3—3 thereof.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to FIG. 1, the novel beverage maker of the present invention is indicated in the general direction of arrow 10 which includes a housing 11 having a base 12 which incorporates components for controls and switches as well as electrical cords and connections in accordance with approved electrical parameters. The container 11 is hollow and includes a top opening covered by a lid 13 which, when removed, permits liquid such as water to be introduced into the interior of the container 11. A visual indicator is represented by nu-